

Acton Historic District Commission
Meeting May 10, 2011
Minutes

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Meeting opened by chair Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann at 7:30PM.

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Also present were Pam Lynn (PL), Ron Rose (RR), Anita Rogers (AR), Terra Friedrichs (TF), David Honn (DH), Michaela Moran (MM), David Barrat (DB) and Mike Gowing (MG) BoS liaison. David Thorpe a possible applicant to HDC appeared as an observer.

No Citizens concerns.

Approval of the minutes of the prior meeting on 4/25/11 is deferred to the next meeting to be held on Thursday, May 26.

Upcoming events include the lecture by Jean Carroon on "Sustainable Preservation, The Power of Preservation: Reuse as a Strategy" on May 16, 2011 at town hall, room 204 at 7PM. Flyers for this event need to be distributed around town. Jean Carroon is one of the top five preeminent architects who spoke to more than 170 attendees at Trinity Church in Boston 2 months ago.

Also on May 16 at 5PM there will be a meeting at the Public Safety Building to discuss the recently purchased Caouette property in South Acton.

TF When does HDC issue a certificate of non-applicability? KAB When the work is just replacement of existing materials in our jurisdiction without any change in form.

The letters to homeowners in the three historic districts introducing and explaining HDC and the obligations of owners of property in the districts were sent out last week by KAB.

7:40 Application #1113, 96 Main Street in the South Acton Historic District; Robert Tromblay owner, not present. Application is for replacing the three-tab shingles on the roof of the main house to match architectural shingles on the addition and for the rebuilding of external fireplace built in the 1960s to match a newer external fireplace built in the 1990s. The application was bifurcated, 1113A and 1113B to allow approval of the replacement of the shingles tonight, 1113A, and to request more information regarding the alteration of the external fireplace 1113B. On motion by MM duly seconded by TF, it was voted unanimously to allow the replacement of the main roof with architectural-type shingles, which are deemed acceptable and will match the roof of the addition. Approval of application and issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness is subject to mailing of abutters' notices.

Regarding Application #1113B more information, pictures, drawings, etc. is needed for a decision regarding the exterior fireplace. Should the redesigned fireplace look more period-appropriate? MM will contact the homeowner, Robert Tromblay for the required information. She will upload photographs of the subject fireplace onto DocuShare. This issue will assigned the 8PM time slot on the May 26 meeting.

8:00PM WAVE: No attendance by applicants, Michael Rosenfeld and Mathias Rosenfeld. Nor will they be available for the first meeting in June. A decision to extend for another years an already extended Certificate of Appropriateness must be made before June 26, 2011.

KAB received answers from town counsel to previous questions; obtaining peripheral permits related to the project other than the building permit does not constitute commencement of activity under Phase II of the CoA; Is the HDC required to extend to CoA? There is no standard on which to base what is required. It is up to the discretion of the HDC whether or not to extend. However, there must be a change of circumstances from those in place at the time of granting the CoA. We cannot consider use but can look at massing and scale in deciding what is appropriate. We erred by looking at function of a building in the past. TF If we issue an extension, can we use this to clarify certain details of the work? There is no time to give detailed approvals. The earlier decision was vague. We should encourage an amendment to Phase II to clarify issues such as the preservation of the white barn and brown house. The applicant's recent expressed desire to demolish the white barn and brown house constitutes a change, which would require an amendment. Ask an architect to look at the structural aspects of those buildings. RR Consideration of use is not within our jurisdiction for considering what is appropriate. DH We shouldn't consider use. But not considering use works to the detriment of the owner because use generates form. It can't be done even though the result will be a finding that there may be an inappropriateness of size.

AR The report from the Rosenfelds regarding the white barn is very casual, not thorough enough to assist in rendering a decision. It is too cursory. We need a more detailed report on which to base our decision.

DH The structural engineer did not go inside the white barn. Instead he merely cited codes required for upgrades. There would be considerable regulation to be complied with if converting the barn to a 2-family house. We need an independent engineer who is familiar with colonial restorations and who is familiar with barns like this; someone who has no vested interest in the subject matter and is not familiar with Acton.

RR Are they proposing to move the building to a new foundation?

AR The original foundation is a significant part of the building. It becomes complicated when considering the timbers and widows.

TF The use concept is out. There is no case law providing precedent. Ann Forbes stated that we were once directed by the BoS to consider use. Now we can't.

DH As to historic preservation, how can we not consider use. Now it's a theater. We need to factor in a change in use. The theater was necessary to provide economics to save the barn. Let the extension expire and have a new application. Hang our hats on the demolition as change.

KAB We will have more discussion on this subject at the next meeting.

TF The theater was what drove the massing. Function drove the massing and now the function has changed.

MM They have no changes. They are saying that we can't save the buildings. They will let the buildings rot. The outcome is the same.

AR Grant the extension so that they will feel more obligated to save the buildings.

RR Structural changes to satisfy floor loadings for sound building for commercial use. Reference to John Buhl. White barn is in terrible shape. We can't deny its condition. There are splintered beams. The structure is a problem. There are trees growing in the cornice. I wouldn't recommend saving it. How did we get into this situation? Use the situation to leverage to replicate the structure as a replacement in kind. PL It is odd that we have to extend to preserve buildings. They are moving the barn but the foundation of the barn is the best part.

KAB We will return to this in June.

8:30 Application #1027 468 Main Street. Dean Charter appeared to present a model of the windows to be used in the "Red House" next to town hall. The windows will be single hung; only the bottom section will operate. The lights will be configured 8 over 1 to match some the windows on the first floor. There will be two units for each gable and will be 8/1 nailed together and will fit into the existing openings. RR is the liaison. RR Is there an energy panel? DC No. The windows will need storms per the energy code. They will be similar to the storms on the first level. Presently there is no money for storm windows for the new windows. Awaiting the decision from HDC to go forward with ordering. Picture shows lower level windows to be 8/2. The upstairs windows should match. DC It won't matter cost-wise what the configuration is. They would still fit in the rough opening. The rough opening for the windows is the same on all four sides of the upper level. TF What was the decision made last September? KAB There was no decision; we got an indefinite extension. DH Wanted to see the energy panel. Motion to issue certificate of appropriateness duly seconded except that the windows will be 8/2 to match those in the lower level. All dormers to be identical. Motion passed unanimously.

MG had a citizen concern taken late. Noticed that there are many homes in the historic districts for sale. We should distribute a letter, electronically if possible, to alert the realtors in the area to point out to prospective buyers that the homes are in one of the historic districts.

DH Reminder that there is a meeting at the public safety building at 5PM Monday 5/16, to discuss the Caouette property.

9:00 Application 1031 Theatre III. Present for T-III were Pam Furnace(PF) of the development committee and Rich Grossman (RG), president of T-III. PF presented a file pictures on her laptop. DH is the liaison. There is a master plan created last fall calling for a change in the entry of the building. T-III changed architects to use the Office of Michael Rosenfeld(OMR). There are no drawings yet. There have been no bids solicited yet. They need a more detailed work order to be more biddable. There is rotted wood in the front that needs to be replaced. TF This was not approved yet? RG No. T-III showed concept to HDC last fall for DH to write a letter of support addressed to CPC. There is an application number but there has been no application yet. HDC never approved anything but windows. T-III What does application entail? MM instituted the assignment of liaisons to each applicant. DH will continue to work with T-III. The application must be as complete as possible. It must include as many drawings and photographs as possible to illustrate the proposed changes. T-III The front step and handrail will be changed. The septic hookup is yet to be determined. The steeple shingles are asphalt and need to be replaced. This will be in-kind work. The prior shingle work predated creation of HDC. The shingles used did not hold up. Better quality of asphalt shingles is needed. Rhinezink would be

too costly. On each side of the main building there are three single pain windows that need to be replaced. Direct replacement would be in-kind. Any change from this would require a CoA. AR Repairs appear to be in-kind. There is nothing to comment on. TF No comment. MM Glad T-III received the CPC grant. All seem to be in-kind repairs. TF Consider using wooden railings in front rather than metal railings. KAB Recommend use of materials as period-appropriate as possible. DH The fire escape flashing is so bad it needs to be taken down. PF We will change the fire escape to remove the turn-around. It will go straight down from the rear of the building to the front. Landscaping up to the building and elevator, can complete this phase. There will be one handicapped ramp. DH Like to see as much as possible of the whole plan to determine what our jurisdiction is. It is typically the front and two sides and as much of the rear as can be seen from the street. We must issue the CoA before Frank Ramsbottom can issue a building permit. We have sixty days to rule on the application once it is filed with the town clerk. MM If all replacement is in-kind we can issue a certificate of non-applicability. DH Break out what is just repair and what is not thus requiring an application for a CoA. Split the application into two parts. RR Nice neat 3-tab shingles. Cap shingles with multiple ridges. This could be expensive though. DB If plan is all in-kind there is no need for comments. KAB Split the phases and do the in-kind work first. TF Send T-III a good example of an application. DH To send a PDF of a good example of an application. KAB any work done at ground level such as repaving the driveway is not in our jurisdiction. RR OMR to help with construction administration. There would be a description of work-pictures used for getting prices. Something describing the work as a part of the application is preferable. Also documents that describe the agreement between T-III and OMR would be helpful for us.

9:30 Sign Enforcement: TF and MM are to do a sample spreadsheet of ten signs in the West Acton Historic District. The information to be included is the address, parcel number, and whether or not there is an application for the sign on file at town hall. Can TF work with Scott Mutch on this. We have all parcel numbers in all HDs from the assessor's office. The goal is to do ten businesses with signs in West Acton to have them complete. MM to give the list to TF for research. AR Need a program consisting of acceptable vs. non-acceptable signs to present to business jointly with EDC. Use simple illustrations to educate businesses. We need a collection of the most attractive signs. We also need to consider what changes to make in the current by-laws. We can do this in 15 days. This would be a 10-15 minute presentation and should be ready sometime next September after the summer vacation season is over.

DH Is working on a list of acceptable manufactured windows and doors. RR The situation regarding replacement of existing single-glazed windows with double-glazed replacement windows is a serious threat to the Historic Districts. Currently Acton Center is virtually all original single-glazed windows. The threat by applicants to appeal HDC decisions not allowing double-glazed replacement and possibility of losing an appeal to allow double-glazed replacement windows could open up a continuing, significant change in the character of the district. The HDC needs to be clear and document why and where double-glazed replacements have been allowed (in basements facing away from Main Street for example), and be prepared to defend its position. 498 Main Street is a game-changer. Double-glazed is a possibility. Those windows should be repaired, not replaced. We need to disseminate information about the benefits of repair vs. replacement. It is up to us to emphasize preference for repair. We can collect articles and scan them to TF to be included in a folder in Docushare.

DH recused himself prior to brief discussion regarding status of the adjacent School Street property. MM to conduct two follow-ups for 445 Main Street and 12 School Street window repair vs. replacement issues.

The MBTA is preparing to obtain bids on certain components of the new South Acton train station. Therefore there was no meeting with the T.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:45.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "David T. Barrat". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David T. Barrat, Secretary